

BOOK REVIEWS

Charles Darwin in Australia

by F.W. & J.M. Nichols

Cambridge University Press, 1989

Pp. 175, \$45.

Clearly, the recent centennial anniversary of Darwin's death has not ended the stream of publications dealing with his life and work, and the present volume provides a welcome addition that both summarizes and illustrates Darwin's Australian connections. The volume briefly introduces H.M.S. *Beagle*, Captain Robert Fitzroy, and many other personalities, and the purposes of the cruise, including the sequence of chronometrical stations at latitudes all round the world, that resulted in the visits of the *Beagle* to Sydney, Hobart and Albany. The *Beagle* arrived in Port Jackson on 11 January 1836 and departed from King George Sound on 14 March, setting course for the Cocos-Keeling Islands. These islands are not included in the present volume although they have been administered by Australia since 1955 and part of the electorate of the Northern Territory since 1984, and were of considerable importance in the formulation of Darwin's views on the development of coral reefs and atolls, described in one of his earlier publications "The Structure and Development of Coral Reefs" (1842), some seventeen years before his magnum opus.

Subsequent chapters describe his journey to Bathurst and his return trip, his impressions of Sydney; his activities in and around Hobart; his visit to King George Sound, with a post-script providing biographies of several of the major participants in Darwin's Australian story, Syms Covington, Conrad Martens, Augustus Earle, J.C. Wickham, Philip P. King, Philip Gidley King and Captain Fitzroy. Appendices provide detailed summaries of the documentary sources relating to Darwin's visit, principally Darwin's field notebooks, diaries, specimen catalogues, abundant correspondence, and the published reports and scientific papers. The volume clearly indicates that Darwin's visit to Australia was not merely as an early tourist, and that he made considerable collections of the fauna of the localities

visited, principally of the insects, many of these eventually proving to be species new to science. He also showed great interest in the geology of the regions through which he travelled and kept detailed notes. He certainly experienced much more difficulty in reaching the top of Mount Wellington than the modern tourist, which probably helped to sharpen his observations. He also collected some fossils, a few mammals and reptiles, fishes and even some barnacles, and a planarian flat-worm that also eventually proved to be a new species and was described by Darwin himself in 1844. Of Darwin's insects, 31 of the Sydney species and 48 of the Albany species were new to science. However Darwin's major direct contribution to Australian zoology was made at a later date, in his 1851-54 Ray Society monographs on the Cirripedia (barnacles) where he described 31 new Australian species. These are still the standard reference works at the present time.

Darwin's attitude to things Australian appears to be generally unfavourable, although he clearly prefers Hobart to Sydney, and he finally leaves without regret. No doubt his views were tinged by his homesickness after the lengthy voyage and the failure of his expected mail to arrive in Sydney. It is interesting to imagine how his ideas might have been influenced if his Australian visit had occurred early in the course of the *Beagle*'s voyage instead of near the end. It might also have further influenced his thought if he had visited some localities in tropical Australia, but the *Beagle*, without Darwin, was not to visit the north until its next voyage.

The volume is well produced and reasonably priced and can be recommended to anyone interested in history or science, or both. It is abundantly illustrated, frequently with contemporary paintings, many of which have not been previously reproduced. Unfortunately, several of them are reproduced on too small a

scale, to that they merely decorate the page rather than inform the reader. The panorama of King George Sound is well worth including, for example, but at least at twice the size. One page in the reviewer's copy was also badly stained.

Both Darwin and Captain Fitzroy formed a low opinion of the book sellers that they found in Australia. Perhaps, if their modern counter-

parts all stock the present volume, the ghosts of Darwin and Fitzroy might be somewhat appeased.

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A Natural History of Domesticated Mammals

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British Museum (Natural History) 1987. ISBN 0-565-01050-6.

Pp. 208; RRP.: \$27.00 (paperback).

This most interesting volume attempts to explain the nature and origin of mammal domestication. The book has done so by cleverly integrating archaeological information with the products of the prolonged process of domestication that so control our lives today.

The book is introduced by a chapter entitled "Man's place in nature at the end of the ice age". Each of the five sections which follow are subdivided into a series of parts. Thus, section 1 "Man-made animals" has 9 parts; section 2 "Exploited captives" has five parts; section 3 "Small mammals" has 2 parts; section 4 "Exploited ungulates in the pre-Neolithic period" has 1 part as does section 5, "Experimental domestication and game ranching past and present". The conclusions "The geography of domestication" rounds off what is a competently and well-written book.

The volume abounds with illustrations and these take the form of colour photographs (25), black and white photographs (47), line drawings (99) and maps (12). These are well chosen, ideally spaced and impart a simple message in concise format.

The appendices at the end of the book includes a section on the nomenclature of the domestic mammals. This consists of a table defining the taxonomic binomials of domestic mammals and their presumed wild parent species as used in the book (appendix 1). A second appendix includes information on climatic sequences and archaeological divisions of the Quaternary period. Both of these are valuable additions, however, appendix 1 provides us with the first of two criticisms which I wish to make.

Firstly, the author argues that "the now widely accepted premise that names based on descriptions of domestic mammals should not be used for wild species whilst at the same time keeping as close as possible to the traditional nomenclature" (p. 195) should be followed. That is, using the next available name to describe the wild taxa. To me this is a misuse of binomial nomenclature. Scientific names serve two functions, in that they provide a means of readily distinguishing taxa and they also provide stability for the commonality of names. Many situations exist where names in common usage have been retained